

**What determines (in)effective post-competition parent-child interactions in British
Tennis? A conversation analysis of car journeys home**

Magnus Hamann¹, Sam N. Thrower², Elizabeth Stokoe³, and Chris G. Harwood⁴

Loughborough University¹

Oxford Brookes University²

The London School of Economics and Political Science³

Nottingham Trent University⁴

Correspondence: Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr Sam
Thrower, Office SNC.G.19, Sinclair Building, School of Sport, Nutrition and Allied Health
Professions, Faculty of Health & Life Sciences, Headington Campus, Oxford Brookes
University, Oxford, OX3 0BP. Email: sthrower@brookes.ac.uk.

Abstract

Although researchers have recently started to investigate naturally occurring parent-child interactions in youth sport, the use of orthographic transcription, combined with video coding or thematic analysis, overlooks the interactional features resulting in researchers potentially over-simplifying such interactions. The purpose of the current study, therefore, was to examine the naturally occurring parent-child interactions which unfold during the post-competition car journey within British tennis. Specifically, the research questions focused on identifying the parental communicative practices that constrain or afford affiliative and productive conversations about children's tennis performance. Audio and video recordings were collected from 13 parent-child dyads ($n = 26$) resulting in 4h 26mins of parent-child interactions. These recordings were transcribed using the Jefferson (2004) system for capturing the production, pace, and organisation of social interaction. Conversation analysis revealed that children resisted or disengaged from the interaction when parents attempted to review their child's performance by highlighting problems or areas for improvement. However, when children initiated conversations about their own performance, and parents aligned with such invitations, extended sequences of affiliative talk unfolded, irrespective of the result or outcome. From an applied perspective, these findings highlight the importance of post-competition discussions being a child-initiated and child-driven interactional practice which promotes ownership of their tennis development and performances.

Keywords: Communication, Verbal Behaviour, Sport Parents, CA, Education

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Highlights

- Children resisted or disengaged when parents attempted to critically review their performance
- Parents were able to re-engage their child by highlighting positive aspects of their performance
- Parents should attribute children's failure to poor strategy and/or the process of learning
- Child-initiated talk about their own performance led to extended sequences of affiliative talk
- Competition debriefs should be a child-initiated and child-driven interactional practice

What determines (in)effective post-competition parent-child interactions in British Tennis? A conversation analysis of car journeys home

Within the youth sport literature, there has been a growing appreciation of the crucial role that parents play in young athletes' experiences and long-term development (see Dorsch et al., 2021 for a review). To date, the majority of research has focused on the types of behaviours parents display during competitions (e.g., positive/supportive vs. negative /critical; Holt et al., 2009); the impact that different behaviours have on child outcomes (supportive vs. pressurising; Holt et al., 2008); children's preferences regarding parental behaviour within the context of youth sport competition (i.e., desirable vs. undesirable; Knight et al., 2010; 2011); and the factors which influence parental involvement (e.g., parental stressors; Harwood et al., 2019). However, more recently researchers have started to move beyond broad characterisations of parental involvement (e.g., support vs. pressure, desirable vs. undesirable), to gain a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the interactions which occur between parents and children, mostly during car journeys (e.g., Elliott & Drummond, 2017; Sutcliffe et al., 2021; Tamminen et al., 2017; Tamminen et al., 2022; Thrower et al., 2022).

Initial qualitative research in this area investigated parents and children's experiences of the car journey to and from competitions (i.e., Tamminen et al., 2017) and the underlying meaning of parents' verbal behaviour (i.e., Elliott & Drummond, 2017). Findings from retrospective interviews and focus groups illustrated that during the car journey home parents often attempted to engage their child in a 'debriefing process' as a means of providing feedback for future improvement and/or offering advice (Elliott & Drummond, 2017). Whilst it was reported that these conversations differed depending on who was present during the car journey (Tamminen et al., 2017) young athletes stated that they enjoyed the 'debriefing process' on the drive home when they were satisfied with their performance but were more

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sensitive to comments when this was not the case (Elliot & Drummond, 2017). However, while interview-based studies can provide insights into how the car journey is perceived or experienced, asking participants about the phenomena of interest (i.e., parent-child interactions) rather than studying it directly places limits on what can be learnt about actual behaviour (see Potter & Hepburn, 2005).

Taking this into consideration, qualitative researchers have begun to record parent-child interactions within the social contexts that surround involvement in youth sport (e.g., car journeys, competitions; Sutcliffe et al., 2021; Tamminen et al., 2022). For instance, Sutcliffe and colleagues (2021) used Mehl's (2017) Electronically Activated Recording (EAR) technique (i.e., recording 50 seconds of interaction every 12.5 minutes) to explore interactions between parents and adolescent junior ice-hockey players during a three-day tournament ($n = 41$). Thematic analysis of 220 'sport related' cases, illustrated how conversations during car rides to and from competition typically focused on discussions of other social agents (e.g., teammates, coaches, other parents), parental social support, and performance-related dialogue (i.e., parents providing technical instruction, positive or negative evaluations, or intrapersonal instruction). Similarly, Tamminen et al. (2022) analysed continuous video recordings of interactions between adolescents from a range of different sports and their parents ($n = 28$) during car journeys to and from competitions. Using a video coding framework, analysis revealed how the amount of time spent talking about sport-related topics was minimal (12.9%) compared to non-sport-related conversations (28.5%) or periods of silence (59.0%). Parents' praise and criticism typically consisted of general or task-oriented comments, with few instances of ego-oriented praise or criticism. In addition, parents asked closed/descriptive questions most frequently, while open/reflective questions were asked least often. Nevertheless, the use of orthographic transcription, combined with video coding or thematic analysis, within these studies overlooks the

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1 interactional features (e.g., emphasis, overlaps, pitch, and volume) resulting in researchers
2 potentially over-simplifying such interactions (Thrower et al., 2022).

3 In order to address these limitations, we (the authors) conducted a research project to
4 examine the live sequential unfolding of parent-child interactions during pre and post-
5 competition car journeys within the context of British tennis. The project built on previous
6 studies using conversation analysis (CA) to understand how interaction is coordinated in
7 parent-child dyads across various public and private / domestic and institutional settings (e.g.,
8 Goodwin & Lloyd, 2020; Keel, 2016). Specifically, audio and video recordings of 13 parent-
9 child dyads were collected, resulting in over 8 hours of interaction. The first focus of this
10 project (see Thrower et al. 2022) was to examine the interactions which unfold during pre-
11 competition car journeys. CA revealed that children resisted or disengaged from the
12 interaction when parents positioned themselves as having authority over, and entitlement to
13 know about, the child's upcoming performance. This positioning was achieved through
14 giving instructions or advice about the child's performance and through asking 'test' wh-
15 questions (e.g., "What was he [the coach] telling you to do?") to which they already knew the
16 answer (i.e., grammatically open but epistemically closed questions). Consistent with the
17 notion of autonomy-supportive parenting (Grolnick, 2003), asking epistemically open wh-
18 questions that enabled children to talk about their areas to focus on, led to extended
19 sequences of affiliative talk (i.e., conversational practices where participants show each other
20 that they align with the affective stance taken by another participant; see Steensig, 2020).

21 This recent shift away from traditional methods of analysing interaction-based data
22 (e.g., thematic analysis, video coding) within the youth sport literature has started to
23 demonstrate where routine parent-child interactional practices in youth sport 'go wrong' as
24 well as how they might be put 'right' (Stokoe, 2014). From an applied and interventionist
25 perspective, CA provides evidence-based examples of effective communicative practice

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which are more precise than the generalised, scripted, or hypothetical advice often provided within communication training literatures (Stokoe, 2014). Nevertheless, there is a need for future research to build upon the current knowledge base and further explore in greater detail the subtleties of naturally occurring parent-child interactions during the car journey home and report the specific features of their structural organisation (Thrower et al., 2022). This is particularly important in individual youth sport contexts (e.g., British Tennis) where competition results matter (e.g., ratings / rankings, selection, future tournament entry) and coaches do not typically attend matches or tournaments, often leaving parents responsible for leading this post-competition ‘debriefing process’ (Elliot & Drummond, 2017). Managing children’s reaction to losses and not knowing exactly what to say or do have also been identified as prominent competition stressors reported by British Tennis parents (Harwood & Knight, 2009a,b). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to expand our previous findings (e.g., Thrower et al. 2022) and examine the naturally occurring parent-child interactions which unfold during the post-competition car journey within British tennis. Specifically, conversational analysis was used to address the following research questions: (a) What parental communicative practices are met with resistance by children when talking about their tennis performance?; and (b) what parental communicative practices enable affiliative and productive talk with children about their tennis performance?

Methodology

Design and Positioning

While CA originated in 1960s USA sociology, it has found its footing in other social science disciplines (especially linguistics and communication), including in psychology via discursive psychology (Stokoe, 2020). CA is an observational science, a theory of human sociality, and a research method for analysing and explicating the systematic organization of social interaction as an infrastructure for social life and institutions (Stokoe et al., 2025). CA

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shares with discursive psychology the view that language - talk and embodied conduct - is best treated as “a domain of public accountability in which psychological states are made relevant” (Edwards, 2006, p. 41), rather than a tool or pathway to ‘accessing’ cornerstone psychological phenomena such as attitudes, emotion, or memory. This means that conversation analysts do not read through language to what people ‘really’ think, experience, or know (Edwards, 1993), and do not make their own ontological or epistemological claims about the ‘reality’ of participants’ lived experiences or cognitive states. Rather, it is interested in how people themselves orient to what each other really thinks, experiences, or knows that is of analytic interest via the “rich surface” of social interaction (Edwards, 2006, p. 41). In doing so, conversation analysts ‘re-specify’ what is real, true, or factual by focusing on people’s own ‘reality analysis’ (Hester & Francis, 1997), including how such things may be manifest in the epistemic gradient of question-and-answer sequences. Therefore, the current study used CA to investigate how “ordinary activities get done methodically and reproducibly” (Schegloff 1992, p. xvii).

Participants

The dataset used in the current study consisted of thirteen parent-child dyads ($n = 26$; see Thrower et al., 2022 for a detailed breakdown of each dyad), collected as part of a wider project examining parent-child interactions before and after youth sport competitions (see Thrower et al., 2022). Parents consisted of 6 mothers and 7 fathers between 39 and 51 years of age ($M_{age} = 46.45$; $SD = 4.57$) with an average of 5.46 ($SD = 1.71$) years of experience as a tennis parent. In addition, eight parents (62%) had a background in sport and/or tennis. Furthermore, children and adolescents (8 male, 5 female) were aged between 8 and 18 years ($M_{age} = 11.15$; $SD = 2.93$), competed at a club ($n = 7$), county ($n = 4$), or regional ($n = 2$) level, and started playing tennis between 3 and 11 years of age ($M_{age} = 5.77$; $SD = 2.45$).

Procedure & Data Collection

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Following ethical approval from Loughborough University's Human Participants Sub-Committee (Ref No: R17-P176), purposeful sampling was used to identify parent-child dyads that met the inclusion criteria (i.e., any parent with a child between the ages of 5-18 years who regularly competed in tennis tournaments). Parents were subsequently approached in person and invited to participate in the current study or responded to an email invitation from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA). Informed consent and assent were obtained from parents and children respectively. Participants were then given, or sent via post, a GoPro Hero 5 Session Camera, a GoPro Suction Cup Mount, a Zoom H1 Handy Recorder, a Sony ECM-CS3 lapel microphone, and step-by-step instructions (see Supplementary Material 1). Participants were asked to record one pre- and post-tournament car journey and were instructed to place the camera in the centre of their car windscreen if their child was in the front seat or to the left of the screen pointing towards themselves and their child if their child was seated directly behind them. There were no specific requirements regarding the type and level of competition or stage of season (e.g., start, middle, or end). In addition, no specific instructions were given to parents about how to interact with their child or who was allowed to be in the car. Whilst the presence of the camera can influence the behaviour of the participants, previous research has shown how, while the camera is ever present, participants still rely on the same structural resources and conversational organisation when interacting (Gordon, 2013). Overall, a total of 23 hours of audio and visual data were collected. Once recordings had taken place participants then returned the recording equipment and were sent a £10 Amazon voucher.

Data Analysis

For data collected during the post-competition car journeys, the qualitative conversation analytic process involved five phases. First, prolonged periods of silence where participants were visibly and exclusively engaged in other activities (e.g., listening to the

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radio, gazing out of the window) were excluded from the analysis unless demonstrably leveraged for the initiation, maintenance, or closing of a sequence of interaction. Second, the complete set of recordings of parent-child interactions (4 hours 26 minutes) were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription service. Third, alongside the audio- and video-recordings, these verbatim transcripts were examined in order to identify sequences about the child's performance during the tournament, which were inductively coded and collated into action-oriented themes (e.g., 'child resists parent-initiated debriefing'). Fourth, in order to build our core collection for analysis, particular extracts were selected and re-transcribed using the Jefferson (2004) system for CA, which captures the production, pace, and organisation of social interaction (see Table 1). Finally, these extracts were analysed using Heritage's (1997) points of entry for CA: (a) turn-taking (i.e., who talks and when); (b) overall structural organisation (i.e., what is the ongoing project, and how does each turn contribute to the progress of that project); (c) sequential organisation (i.e., how do sequences of talk relate to one another); (d) turn design (e.g., lexical choice, gaze, embodied practices); and (e) interactional and epistemic asymmetries (e.g., orientations to who has the right to talk about a topic, who has the authority to begin and end conversations).

[Insert Table 1 here]

Analysis at this stage works to uncover the endogenous 'orderliness' of each sequence of talk, as well as identifying the temporal relevance and organisation of each social action (see LeCouteur & Cosh, 2016). This stage of analysis attends to how participants orient to and respond to each other's turns-at-talk (Schegloff, 1968), including how they use their bodies, gaze, and material objects in the spaces around them as resources for producing accountable and relevant responses (see Mondada, 2013). In our analysis, this included how the physical environment of the car and the objects that comprise it, as well as the activity of driving itself, shaped the trajectory and progressivity of the interactions (see Thrower et al., 2022). In doing

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so, participants display their understanding of the action done in a prior turn (e.g., greeting, question, request, complaint) in the very production of their own next turn (i.e., the ‘Next Turn Proof Procedure’; van Burgsteden, 2023). In this regard, CA is not like other forms of qualitative inquiry, since the analyst’s job is to describe the practices through which people themselves interpret each other’s talk (see Drew, 2012) and is thus not ‘interpretative’ or ‘subjective’ in the familiar senses these terms are applied (see Edwards, 2006). The final stage of analysis involved moving back and forth between detailed examinations of specific cases and an accumulating view of what they together constituted. As is typical in CA, the analytic process was also informed by ‘data sessions’, where we worked together to explore fragments of data (see Betz, 2024 for a detailed description of data sessions). The analysis identified systematic differences regarding how effective parents were in terms of initiating sequences of talk about tennis performance with their children. The specific extracts referred to in the results section below were selected as they best represented the different strategies that were identified during the initial analysis of all recordings.

Quality Criteria

Although CA is often considered a ‘qualitative’ method, with its use of recordings and detailed transcripts, it is not readily categorizable as being either qualitative or quantitative. Concerns of quality in CA are relevant at three different stages of the research process (e.g., data collection, transcription, and analysis; see Janusz and Peräkylä, 2021). The following criteria, therefore, can be used as a starting point for judging the current study. First, the current study used *high-quality audio and video recordings* and presented sufficient extracts to evidence the analytic claims made, including *recurrent patterns of action* (e.g., children resisting parent-initiated debriefing). In addition, by collecting naturally occurring data (e.g., data that would have occurred without researcher input), we were able to analyse the same resources that participants themselves mobilise to interact (i.e., visibility/audibility). Second,

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detailed technical transcription captured the production, pace, and organisation of social interaction (see Table 1; Jefferson, 2004) and included embodied/multimodal conduct (see Mondada, 2013). Data extracts were also selected based on the sequential organization of interaction allowing the analysis of the initiation and conclusion of any given sequence. Third, although the current study was guided by research questions (rather than ‘unmotivated looking’), the analytical process was data driven and we remained *open for variations in data*, through engaging in ‘data sessions’ (Betz, 2024). The process of data analysis was also guided by inductive *coding* and *by tracing the participants own interpretations*, via the ‘Next Turn Proof Procedure’ (van Burgsteden, 2023). As Janusz and Peräkylä (2021) stated: “the aim is not to present the researcher’s own interpretation of the meaning of utterances and actions, but rather, to show how the participants of interaction interpret their own and each other’s actions” (p.9).

Results

The analysis and results are presented in three sections. The first section (i.e., *Children Resist Parent-Initiated Debriefing*) illustrates how children resisted, through minimal engagement, disagreement, looking out the window, or trying to change the conversation topic, their parents’ attempts to initiate a ‘debriefing’ of their performance. The second section (i.e., *Parents Repair the Debriefing Process and Re-engage Children*) shows that, whilst most parents abandoned their attempt to initiate a conversation with their child about their performance when met with resistance, some were able to re-engage their children by offering differing attributions and reiterating positive aspects of their performance. The final section (i.e., *Children Initiate the Debriefing Process*) demonstrates how when children initiated the conversation about their performance it led to more in-depth and insightful interactions during the car journey home.

Children Resist Parent-Initiated Debriefing

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The first extract is taken from a car journey home between a 47-year-old father (who played basketball at University) and his 9-year-old son who competes at a club level. The child had been competing in a local grade four tournament, and the interaction began just after the parent and child had entered the car, fastened their seatbelts, and the parent had started the engine. So far, the parent has asked the child “are you tired?” and the child seems visibly upset (i.e., frowning and sitting slumped in the front passenger seat).

Extract 1: Parent-Child Dyad 10

01 ((Radio is on when they enter the car))
02 ((The radio is turned down before the conversation starts))
03 P: So wha- what can you tell me:..
04 P: Why- (0.2) Why (.) was your attitude (0.7) negative in
05 the first two games.
06 (1.0)
07 C: °>Because I was< lo:sing°.
08 (1.0)
09 P: But (baba:) (0.5) gh hhh The thing i:s (0.5) You lose a
10 point, (0.2) You come back, (0.2) You win a point.
11 (1.0)
12 P: .hhhh
13 (0.5)
14 P: You played in >second< (.) ga[me-] [Baba]
15 C: [It's frustr][ating], =It's
16 stressful.
17 P: =I know it's frustrating, =but you were: (1.2) fou:r all.
18 (1.0)
19 P: And you <gave it> up,
20 (0.2)
21 P: >You know you-< (1.0) You- (.) did well. (0.2) To reach
22 four-four. =And then you gave up? (0.5) in the tie[break].
23 C: [I did]n't
24 °give up°.
25 (0.7)
26 P: You didn't play well, =You put your head down. =You just need
27 to be proud (.) .h of your game. =You need to be proud of
28 what you are doing.
29 (2.0)
30 P: And just keep playing your tennis.
31 (6.3)

In this extract, the parent opens (line 03) with a ‘so-prefaced’ wh-question (“So wha-
what can you tell me:..”). This ‘so-prefaced’ design has previously been found to indicate that
the upcoming turn is “emerging from incipency rather than being contingent on the
immediately preceding talk” (Bolden, 2009, p. 974). In other words, the so-preface reveals
the parent’s orientation to the immediate relevance of this topic (i.e., the child’s performance
in the tournament), in this setting, at this point in time (he does not say, “So what do you
want to do when we get home?”). The question itself has a grammatically ‘open-ended’

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1 design (i.e., it is a wh-question, not an interrogative) but it is also, as introduced earlier,
2 *epistemically* open, in that it is not a ‘known-answer’ question. However, rather than letting a
3 gap develop for the child to respond, the parent immediately asks another wh-question which
4 is much more of a ‘test’ or ‘known-answer’ question in its design (“Why (.) was your attitude
5 (0.7) negative in the first two games.”), since it includes a presupposition that the child’s
6 attitude was negative and seeks an account. In other words, rather than asking a question
7 where a wide range of possibilities would constitute an opposite response (“what can you tell
8 me...”), only an account for his attitude will meet the constraints of this new question. At line
9 07, the child’s response is delayed by one second (line 06) and produced at low volume,
10 marking it as delicate (“^o>Because I was< lo:sing^o”) (see Pomerantz, 1984). When the parent
11 takes a next turn, he does so by positioning himself in opposition to the child’s response
12 (“But”) and using an endearment term (“baba”). Pauletto et al. (2017) have previously shown
13 how parents (and only parents) use endearment terms in interaction with children to repair
14 conversations when children resist the parent’s project. The parent then seemingly resets the
15 conversation by saying “the thing i:s”. This phrase (the *N* is) has previously been found as a
16 vehicle for focalising what follows (Hundt, 2022), a way to upgrade an epistemic claim
17 (Hsieh, 2018), and as a marker of sub-topic shift (Pinson, 2022). By resetting and
18 retopicalising, the parent’s turn glosses over the child’s response and returns the
19 conversational project to the critique of the child’s attitude. In the following lines, the parent
20 continues by producing a negative assessment of the child’s tennis performance (“And you
21 <gave it> up[...]”, lines 12-19). During this critique, the child responds twice (lines 15-16
22 and 23-24). The first response is produced as an account (“[It’s frustr][ating],=It’s
23 stressful.”), the next as a direct challenge of the parent’s critique (“[I did]n’t ^ogive up^o.”). The
24 sequence ends with the parent rephrasing the critique as advice (“=You need to be proud of
25 what you are doing.” and “just keep playing your tennis”). As the child does not respond to

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this advice, the parent expands the advice after a 2.0 second silence. When the child also does not respond to this expansion of the advice, the parent abandons the project, and they do not discuss tennis further on that journey.

In the next extract, a 43-year-old father (who plays recreational/club-level tennis) and his 10-year-old son, who competes at a county level, are discussing the child's performance. When this extract starts, the child and father are already in the car, driving, and the father has just ended a telephone conversation with the child's mother. While on the telephone, which was on speaker mode, the father had been telling the mother that their child was not able to keep up with other players and when the father told the mother that the child was "not playing well", the child interjected "I was", though the father ignored the comment in the moment. After the telephone conversation ends, the extract below begins.

Extract 2: Parent-Child Dyad 9

01 P: You was what.
02 (0.4)
03 C: Playing well.
04 (0.7)
05 P: (Wait- You played) well: but (.) actually playing
06 correctly is [>two dif]ferent things<,
07 C: [Yeah]
08 C: I was ((c hild leans towards air condition))
09 P: That's >two different things<.
10 (2.2) ((Leans back from air condition - looking at dad))
11 P: Okay, ((Father looks at child, child looks down))
12 (4.1)
13 P: >Do you see what I< mean.
14 (1.4)
15 P: Cos today >there was-< (0.7) >there was a few things< that-
16 (0.7) that didn't make sense to me?
17 (.)
18 P: Cos you kn- I know (You're actually good)?
19 (3.3) ((Child leans forward towards air condition.
20 Shifts gaze at TRP - Dad looks tw Child))
21 P: Yeah?
22 (6.8) ((Childs leans back and forwards to air condition
23 father looks tw child and back.))
24 C: (Great)
25 (2.4) ((Child keeps touching air condition - father
26 looks back and forth))
27 P: Wha- What are you doing?
28 C: >How do you< make the a:ir go colder.

This extract starts when the parent invites the child to explain how the match went by reusing the formulation of the child's previous challenge of his description of the

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performance (line 01) and the child states that he believed that he was “playing well” (line 03). By challenging the parent’s assessment, the child positions himself as someone who has epistemic right and access to the assessed (his tennis performance). In response, the parent maintains his critique of the child’s performance by responding that playing well and playing correctly is not the same thing (lines 05-06). Reformulations of epistemic statements have previously been found to be a way of claiming epistemic authority over a subject (Heritage & Raymond, 2005). The child attempts again to resist the parent’s negative characterisation (“I was” in line 08), followed by the parent repeating the statement and as such the claim of epistemic authority (“that is two different things”) (line 09). In response, the child, visibly and bodily, orients to another activity by leaning forward and fidgeting with the car’s air conditioning (AC). As the child leans back, the child turns back to the parent. Previous research has shown suspending and delaying second assessments as a way to circumvent the production of an inapposite assessment (Aldrup et al., 2021). By momentarily engaging in another activity, the child is visibly and sequentially unavailable to respond at that moment. Once the child finishes fidgeting with the AC, and looks back to the parent, the parent picks up where the interaction was suspended by pursuing an agreement with the negative characterisation again. As a way of pursuing agreement, the parent produces a response eliciting “okay” (line 11) while looking towards the child. The parent is hearably and bodily reengaging the child holding him accountable for producing a response. Again, this does not lead to the child engaging, instead the child again disengages from the conversation by not responding to the response by eliciting “okay” and by instead looking down and away from the parent, who is at the moment still looking directly at the child.

After a longer silence (4.1 seconds), the parent reintroduces the topic by directly eliciting a response from the child; asking for agreement with the negative assessment (“>Do you see what I< mean.”). The rest of the extract shows how the parent does not manage to get

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a response from the child. Instead, at the points in conversation where it would be relevant for the child to respond, the child instead visibly engages in another activity (turning up the AC) (see line 19-20, 22-23, 25-26, and 28).

Parents Repair the Debriefing Process and Re-engage Children

In line with the two extracts above, the child in the next extract resists the father's attempts at engage in conversations about the tournament and disengages from this talk (by fidgeting with a sweet wrapper and looking out the car window). This extract comes from a conversation between a 9-year-old boy and his 45-year-old father (who does not have a background in sport) about tennis. The child has lost his final match and has been resisting having any kind of conversation with the father. The child is visibly frustrated (loud sighs and a miserable look in his eyes). Prior to this extract, the father has been disagreeing with the child's characterisations of the match (e.g. "You said this would be an easy match [...] I did not agree with that").

Extract 3: Parent-Child Dyad 5

01 P: Now- (1.0) What I: liked (2.0) is that you:: (0.4) You
02 were- f:- (.) fighting every point.
03 (1.0)
04 P: Like we agreed before:,
05 (0.6) ((Child turns head to look straight))
06 P: You were playing deep balls, (0.7) And- (0.5) I think one
07 of the reasons that maybe (1.0)
08 ((Child turns further away from car window and
09 is looking out the car window slightly towards
10 the parent))
11 P: E:h:: You lost the first game.=Was that >you were playing<
12 deep balls to:: (.) this kid.=And some of them went
13 out.=.Snih.
14 P: But it's part of:: (1.0) .w.-=Playing deep. (.) You know.
15 (1.0)
16 P: Sometimes they go: (0.4) They go out. (.)
17 ((Child shifts in seat turning body towards
18 parent))
19 P: But I thought that was:: (.) good effort.
20 (1.7) ((Parent turn to meet child's gaze while car 21
22 is parked))
23 P: And then you di:::d hh (.) Your backhands were:: (.) Were
24 good.
25 (1.8)
26 P: Right?
27 (0.4)
28 C: Yeah,
29
30 ((The parent continues to provide praise and
31 tells the child to focus on the positive
32 things he did that day. During this period, the
33 child maintains visibly engaged))

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At the start of the extract, the child is looking out the car window. The extract begins with the parent producing a turn-initial “Now-”, marking a shift in pace from the previous conversation. Research has shown that the turn initial ‘now’ marks the beginning of an issue-to-be-dealt-with (Mazeland, 2024). The parent follows up with a series of positive assessments of the child’s performance. These positive assessments are explicitly marked as the parent’s experience (“What I: liked”). By explicitly constructing the evaluation as being something that is seen from the parent’s point of view, the parent is not claiming to have (epistemic) right to make assessments about the child’s tennis performance (see Raymond & Heritage, 2006; Heritage & Raymond, 2005). This type of assessment, known as *my side* or *subject-side* assessments, have been found to mitigate or avoid conflicts as they allow contrasting assessments to be put forward unproblematically (Edwards & Potter, 2017). Furthermore, by constructing the statements as something that is experienced from one (personal) side can serve as a vehicle for inviting someone to assess the same object (Pomerantz, 1980). The parent maintains this *my side* evaluative stance throughout this extract (e.g., see “I think” in line 06 and “I thought” in line 19). In response to the parent’s continued positive *my side* evaluations, the video recording shows how the child, step-by-step, shifts his gaze from looking out the window opposite the parent (when the extract starts), then looking out the front windscreen (line 05), then slightly towards his parent (line 08-18), and finally directly at him (line 17-18).

While the parent does not accomplish completely securing engagement beyond minimal conversation about tennis, the extract highlights two important points. Firstly, it shows how the parent turns the child from not wanting to engage in a conversation about tennis to being visibly listening and engaging with the parent’s feedback by looking at the parent and responding (although minimally). While the child does not fully engage in the assessment activity, it is noticeable that the parent successfully produces *evaluative teaching*

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1 *moments* for the child, by demonstrating specific things someone could focus on when
2 evaluating tennis performance. The parent maintains the child's current engagement and
3 continues to engage the child gradually more while also producing explanations for some of
4 the *problems* the child experienced in the matches (e.g. see lines 11-13). Importantly, these
5 teachable points are delivered without the child disengaging from the conversation and when
6 the conversation about tennis ends, the child is visibly less upset than when the conversation
7 began.

8 **Children Initiate the Debriefing Process**

9 The fourth extract begins just after the camera has been turned on by the 39-year-old
10 mother (who is an ex-national level swimmer and current Physical Education teacher) and
11 there are two children present in the car: An 8-year-old girl who has participated in a grade
12 four tennis tournament and her older brother. The parent said "Hi" to the camera, after which
13 the girl begins evaluating her tennis performance. While there may have been a pre-camera
14 conversation, the extract shows a conversation about tennis that is led by the child and
15 supported by the parent.

16 **Extract 4: Parent-Child Dyad 3**

```
17      01      C1:      Uhm (0.4) I did quite well in my competition,  
18      02      P:       Okay,  
19      03              (1.0)  
20              ((5 lines removed of another child in the back of the car  
21              asking another question))  
22      08      C1:      So: (0.2) First of all? uhm- (.) I played the last  
23      09              person,=She was very ki:nd,=.hh She was called (0.3)  
24      10              Rebecca?  
25      11      P:       M:m,  
26      12      C1:      uhm n And she: also got (.) the spirit of the game.  
27      13              (0.2)  
28      14      C1:      Cos she was really ki:nd.  
29      15              (0.3)  
30      16      C1:      [She was ( )].  
31      17      P:       [She was a lo]vely gi:rl,  
32      18      P:       Wasn't she,  
33      19              (0.2)  
34      20      C1:      Yes  
35      21              (0.5)  
36      22      C1:      I (do) know she was spirit of the <ga:me> (0.3) and I know  
37      23              her name was Lilly.  
38      24              (3.0)  
39              ((1 line removed where the other child corrects the name))  
40      26              (3.0)  
41      27      C1:      ( ) So:: ((Noise in microphone)) that (.) was (.) what-  
42      28              (0.3) >There was uhm (.) And I think I pla:yed well in my
```

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1 29 (0.2) fi:rst match <as we:ll>?
2 30 (1.0)
3 31 C1: Because (0.2) >It was a boy< (0.6) He-=He thought >he was
4 32 about< third or second in the county and I (.) got (0.2)
5 33 two points off him.
6 *((For the next 164 lines, the parent and children*
7 *continue to discuss the tournament scores, what C1 will*
8 *tell her coach / write in her diary (i.e., the things*
9 *she did well and would like to work on), and how she had*
10 *achieved her objectives (i.e., hitting the ball deep and*
11 *winning six points)).*

12 The extract begins with the child initiating a sequence with an assessment about her
13 performance in the tournament (line 01). The assessment is positive, though modified by
14 “quite”. By modifying the assessment, the child can be heard making a positive assessment
15 while also not claiming absolute rights to make the assessment (see Raymond & Heritage,
16 2006) managing the delicate matter of self-praising (Pomerantz, 1978). The child seems to
17 treat the parent’s “Okay” (line 2) as a ‘go ahead’ before she begins assessing her performance
18 (line 08ff). The child sets up the expanded sequence as a list of observations (see “First of
19 all?” line 08) which she continues to expand on after the end of the except. The first
20 expansion presented by the child is framed as a positive assessment of another player (see
21 lines 09, 12, and 14). The parent and child continue to discuss the child’s tennis performance
22 in detail, with the parent providing positive assessments regarding specific aspects of
23 performance (e.g., “I’m very proud of you”, “Lovely shots”, “You looked very relaxed”).

24 The final extract is another example of a child-initiated conversation about the tennis
25 performance. It comes from conversation between a mother (without a background in sport)
26 and her 11-year-old son after the child had won a club-level team tennis match. The extract
27 has been taken from the beginning of the recording. The parent and the child have just entered
28 the car and are preparing to leave the tennis club.

Extract 5: Parent-Child Dyad 8

30 01 C: (Gee) that was gooud.
31 02 (3.5) *((Parent is moving around in seat - getting*
32 03 *ready to drive))*
33 04 P: Was (it) gooud.
34 05 C: Mhm?
35 06 P: What was gooud,

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1 07 C: (I'm a favourites),=I played rather well.
2 08 (0.9) ((P buckles in))
3 09 P: Okay?
4 10 (0.6)
5 11 P: Becau:se,
6 12 C: .snih. Because I did (.) the things that I m- (.)
7 13 >set out to do<.
8 14 (1.2)
9 15 C: (I've-) (.) Got my height on my forehand,
10 16 (0.2)
11 17 P: Yeah?
12 18 (1.6)
13 19 C: U- A- (0.7) Uhm: (.) Got my serve back (crossing) right?
14 20 (0.8)
15 21 P: Yeah?
16 22 (0.3)
17 23 C: An:d- (0.4) just generally played (.) ↑quite ↑well?
18 24 (0.8)
19 25 P: (1.2) ((P nods slowly))
20 26 P: °Mkay,°
21 27 (1.0)
22 28 C: (>Pretty good<),
23 29 (1.0)
24 30 P: >Did you enjoy it<,
25 31 C: Yeah,=It was really good fun,=Yeah,
26 32 (1.2)
27 33 P: What did you think about your (.) opponents,
28 ((20 lines omitted where the child assesses his
29 opponents as giving up too easily, that it
30 influenced the opponent's performance negatively
31 and that the opponent could have played with more
32 'potential'))
33 53 P: That's probably right,
34 54 (0.3) ((Parent makes 'impressed' reverse smile))
35 55 P: ↑Good ↑analysis.
36

37 When the extract begins, the child produces a positive object-side assessment (“(Gee)
38 that was goo:d.”) (see Edwards & Potter, 2017). The assessment is produced as a neutral
39 observable ‘fact’. The initial response from the parent is to repeat the assessment as a
40 question for the child (“what was good”). The child initially treats this question as a repair
41 initiator but when the parent explicitly asks the child to elaborate on the assessment (line 06),
42 it prompts the child to unpack the reason for the assessment (line 07). This prompts the child
43 to produce a series of elaborating assessments. Each elaborating assessment is responded to
44 by the parent with invitations to continue (see “Okay?”, “Yeah?”, and “Yeah?” in lines 09,
45 17, and 21). These response tokens pass the floor back to the child as they are produced with
46 a rising intonation that signals the information as received while also mobilising the child to
47 respond to the information receipt by providing more information (see Stivers and Rossano,
48 2010). As the child repeats the initial assessment (line 23), the child is signalling that it is the

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end of that series of elaborating assessments, and the parent receives the assessments by nodding slowly and producing a low volume, responsive “Mkay,” after a 0.8-second-long silence (line 26). The child responds to this information receipt by reformulating the assessment (line 28) producing a downgraded assessment of their own (“pretty good”). By producing an assessment, the child is marking that a responsive assessment was conditionally missing from the parent’s turn (see Schegloff, 1968). By downgrading the assessment from “gee that was good” to “pretty good”, the child is treating the lack of uptake as marking some disagreement with the initial assessment and downgrades accordingly. In response to the child’s second assessment, the parent instead produces a counter (see Schegloff, 2007) in the form of a question that invites the child to assess whether he enjoyed the tournament; shifting the focus from performance to experience. After the child has agreed to enjoying tournament (“It was really good fun”), the parent invites the child to assess his opponents (line 33), shifting focus from personal performance to the experience and focusing on the other players as well. The extract shows how the parent both positions the child as someone who has ownership over performance and experience as well as positioning the child as the one who can assess the performance of the other participants. At the same time, the extract shows how both the child and the parent seem to treat the parent as having rights to assess the child’s response (see “good analysis” line 53-55) without treating it as a test question (e.g. by saying “that’s correct”).

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to examine the naturally occurring parent-child interactions which unfold during the post-competition car journey within British tennis. Specifically, the research questions focused on identifying the parental communicative practices that constrain or afford affiliative conversations about children’s tennis performance. Findings from the current study support the notion that parents’ praise and criticism during

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the car journey home (i.e., ‘debriefing process’) from competitions typically consisted of general or task-oriented comments, with few instances of ego-oriented feedback (Tamminen et al., 2022). However, although previous studies (e.g., Knight et al., 2010) have suggested children prefer comments on effort and attitude even if the feedback is critical, our findings showed that children resisted any attempt from parents to offer task-orientated criticisms (e.g., negative attitude to losing, giving up; Harwood & Thrower, 2020) and unlike their parents did not use collective pronouns (e.g., ‘we’ and ‘us’) indicative of a shared social identity (Coffee et al., 2020). These findings were consistent, even if children believed they had played or performed well (see Elliot & Drummond, 2017), and may be due to them not viewing their parents as having sufficient knowledge, experience, or credibility to critique their performance and offer feedback/advice (see Knight et al., 2010).

Building on the notion of resistance, our previous research exploring parent-child interactions during the car journey to tennis tournaments (Thrower et al., 2022) has shown children used ‘modified compliance’ (e.g., minimal responses’) to both conform to parental instruction whilst at the same time also resisting the parent’s claim of deontic authority. However, in this analysis, we found that during the car journey home children use more direct resistance, indicative of their emotional states (e.g., angry, upset, frustrated). From a theoretical perspective, these ‘actor-observer differences’ (Rees et al., 2005) illustrate the problem of parents attributing poor performance to natural ability (i.e., internal/stable/uncontrollable factors; see Weiner, 2018). Whilst it is generally considered that the principal prescription derived from attribution models is to recommend parents make attributions to a lack of effort (i.e., internal/unstable/controllable), our findings show that if a child has been expending high effort, then encouraging them to attribute failure to a lack of effort can be disheartening, lead to resistance, and a sense of learned helplessness (e.g., Extract 1; Rees et al., 2005). As children are unable to fully differentiate between effort and

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ability (see Kipp, 2018), attributing failure to a lack of effort, may be viewed as a criticism of their ‘effort ability’ (i.e., internal/stable/uncontrollable) and limit their expectations for future success. Furthermore, during adolescence such resistance could also be indicative of ‘effort’ becoming a rhetorical device used by parents to judge performance in comparison to their child’s opponents / peers (i.e., more aligned with a parent-initiated ego orientated climate; see Harwood & Thrower, 2020) rather than simply their motivation (Clarke et al., 2018). The complexity of these findings illustrates why tennis parents report managing children’s reaction to a loss and not knowing exactly what to say as prominent competition stressors (Harwood & Knight, 2009a,b).

Extending this point further, parents in the current study also typically abandoned their attempt to initiate a ‘debriefing process’ when met with resistance from their child (Thrower et al. 2022). However, it is important to note that some parents were able to successfully re-engage their child by highlighting the positive aspects of their performance and attributing aspects of performance that the child struggled with to more controllable and unstable factors (e.g., phases of learning). These findings support recent suggestions within the literature (see Coffee et al., 2020) that instead of consistently attributing poor performance to a lack of effort, parents should encourage attributions to poor strategy and/or the process of learning. It also speaks to the importance of parents drawing upon the multiple ways that their child might evidence progress or learning in matches whereby their perceived competence isn’t isolated to parental judgements of a single element. Such attributions align with children’s broad preferences for feedback that is both positive and realistic during car journeys home (see Knight et al., 2011).

In addition to showing how (and when) children resist parents’ attempts to critically review their performances, the findings suggest that when children initiated the conversation about their performance, it led to extended sequences of affiliative talk irrespective of if the

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child lost (e.g., Extracts 4) or won (e.g., Extract 5; Heritage & Raymond, 2005). Specifically, being attuned to children's feelings / emotional states and allowing them to make decisions (e.g., when they want to talk about their performance) within agreed boundaries (e.g., a debriefing process should take place to facilitate learning) is consistent with the notion of autonomy-supportive parenting (see Grolnick, 2003). Furthermore, the current study shows how some parents then scaffolded and structured the debriefing process by challenging children to think about their performance from different perspectives (e.g., strengths, areas for improvement, learning from/about the opponent) to optimise the learning process and their subsequent development (Vygotsky, 1978). Put simply, autonomy-supportive parents were more responsive to their child's mood, were willing to engage in open bi-directional communication to facilitate development/learning and recognised the value of providing positive post-match feedback (i.e., highlighting the things the child did well; Grolnick, 2003).

From an applied perspective, these findings have important implications for the design and delivery of sport parent education programmes (e.g., Thrower et al., 2023). Specifically, practitioners are encouraged to explain the importance of parents' 'interpreter' role (particularly in the absence of coaches attending matches/tournaments; Fredricks & Eccles, 2004) and draw upon examples of rich naturally occurring parent-child interactions and use them to highlight where routine interactional practices go wrong (i.e., critically reviewing children's performances; Stokoe, 2014) and how they might be put right (i.e., child-initiated and child-driven interactional practices which promotes ownership of their tennis development and performances). However, careful consideration must also be given to children's age and stage of learning. For instance, parents of younger children may have to play a more active role in initiating and structuring the 'debriefing process' by asking genuinely open questions (e.g., how was that from your perspective? can you talk me through it from your point of view?), helping children learn from their experience (e.g., what did you

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find difficult? what did you do well?), problem solve (e.g., what do you think you could have done differently?) and formulate an action plan (e.g., what would you do next time?). In line with Vallerand's (1987) reflective appraisal model, guiding children towards 'reflection-on-action' as part of an agreed post-competition routine is likely to support their ability to 'reflect-in-action' over time and optimise their learning, development, and performances (see Cropley et al., 2023). Furthermore, practitioners should also illustrate how parents' feedback should be linked to pre-match goals (see Extract 4) and aim to strengthen children's perceptions of competence, particularly during late childhood and early adolescence (Kipp, 2018). The provision of positive feedback from effortful engagement in a range of relevant performance elements or processes as well as carefully thought-out attributions for both perceived success (e.g., hard work) and failure (e.g., phases of learning, wrong strategy) represent important strategies here. By facilitating the interactions needed to help their child to actively engage, cognitively process, and cope with their competition experiences, parents are also likely to strengthen their relationship with their child (see Thrower et al., 2021).

The current findings and applied implications should be considered in light of several potential limitations. Firstly, the parent-child interactions may have been influenced by the awareness of being recorded (i.e., 'Observer's Paradox'). However, these moments are clearly visible to the analyst and therefore the extent to which recording devices alter behaviour is often overstated (Gordon, 2013; Jackson, 2018). While we did observe participants look at the camera at times, nothing in the analysis indicates the presence of the camera influenced the interactions in any meaningful way. Secondly, by recruiting parents and children from a range of different age groups, the current study may overlook subtle and nuanced differences in interactional practices which could be explained by children's developmental stages. In particular, each child's ability to control their emotions and engage in a debriefing process is likely to be dependent upon their cognitive development, notably the ability to solve

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problems, reason from known principles, and engage in hypothetical thinking (e.g., different future strategies; Kipp, 2018). In addition, although we have made links where possible to our previously published study which used the same dataset (see Thrower et al., 2022), there were instances when pre-competition self-labelling was directly re-visited by children during the car journey home. Future research is needed to more closely examine pre-, during, and post-match interactions together (e.g., case studies) and/or over time to provide important contextual detail and further understanding of parent-child interactional practices. Finally, it is possible that not all of the debriefing process occurred in the car journey home, or may have continued once the parents and children had left the car. As such, we encourage researchers to try and capture these interactions as and when they occur (e.g., around the family dinner table, during the car journey to training the following week).

In conclusion, the current study extended and advanced current understanding regarding parent-child interactions during car journeys. CA revealed that children resisted or disengaged from the interaction when parents attempted to critically review their child's performance by highlighting problems or areas for improvement (e.g., attitude, effort, and technical/tactical skills). However, when children initiated the conversation about their own performance, it led to extended sequences of affiliative talk irrespective of the result or outcome. From an applied perspective, these findings highlight the importance of post-competition discussions being a child-initiated and child-driven interactional practice which promotes ownership of their tennis development and performances. Such findings have important implications to help inform ongoing and future sport parent interventions.

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Data Availability Statement: The participants of this study did not give written consent for their data to be shared publicly, so due to the sensitive nature of the research supporting data is not available.

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Table 1.

Transcription Symbols

Symbol	Example	Description
(.)	but (.) actually	A micropause - a hearable silence the length of only a beat.
(0.7)	An:d- (0.4) j <u>u</u> st	A timed pause - measured in tenths of seconds.
[]		Square brackets show overlapping speech.
> <	>How do you<	Arrows indexing that speech is produced faster than surrounding speech.
()	(Wait- You played)	Indicates unclear section where the transcriber has transcribed their best interpretation of what was said.
(())	((Child leans towards AC))	A comment or observation made by the transcriber about that moment in the interaction.
<u>Underline</u>	What was goo:d	Indicates syllables that are produced with hearably more emphasis. Underline under the first letter in a word also indicates a slight rise in pitch on the word.
=	Ye <u>a</u> h,=It was	Indicates that there is no pause between the production of two words.
:	So::	Indexically shows a stretched-out sound. Additional colons indicate an even more stretched out sound.
°	°give <u>u</u> p°	The degree sign indicates syllables or words distinctly quieter than surrounding speech by the same speaker.
-	Cause you kn-	A dash indicates a cut-off. In phonetic terms this is typically a glottal stop.
. ; , ˆ ?	Ye <u>a</u> h?	Placed at the end of a turn to mark final pitch direction at turn boundaries: Final falling intonation (.) Final dip in intonation (;) Level/flat intonation (,) Somewhat rising intonation (ˆ) Rising intonation (?)
.sound.	.Snih.	Denotes a sound produced on inbreath, often nasal. Such as sniffs.

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Supplementary Material 1

Participant Instructions

1. You will be given: 1 x Zoom digital voice recorder, 1 x GoPro 5 session camera (including mounting suction cup), 1 x Sony Lapel Microphone, 1 x USB charging cable, and 2x AA replacement batteries.



2. Before starting your journey to the match/tournament, attach the GoPro to your car windscreen using the suction cup. Place the suction cup in the centre of your windscreen (see top photo on the right) if your child is in the front seat, or to the left of the screen pointing towards you and your child if your child is seated behind you (see bottom photo on the right). Press the central button on the suction cup and then push the lever downwards to secure the GoPro.



3. Press the central button on the top of the GoPro to start recording. The camera is recording when the red light in the top right-hand corner of the GoPro is flashing (see photo). The small screen on the top will also be on and display the battery status.

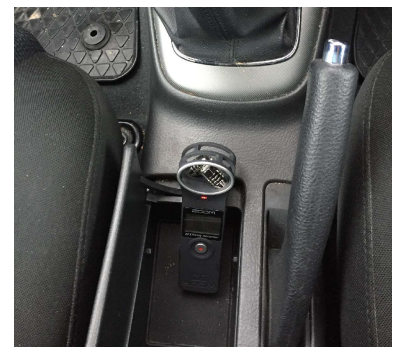


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- 1
- 2 4. Turn on the digital voice recorder by holding down for
- 3 one/two seconds the on/off switch on the bottom right hand
- 4 side of the voice recorder. To start recording simply press
- 5 the silver and red circle on the front of the voice recorder.
- 6 The digital voice recorder is recording when the red light on
- 7 the top is on.

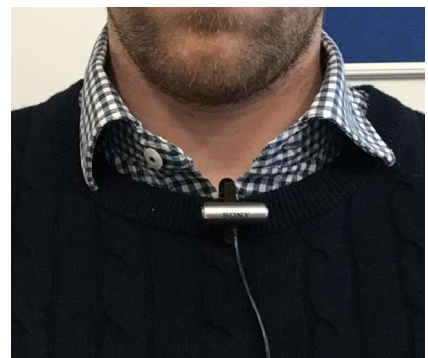


- 8
- 9 5. Place the voice recorder in-between the two front seats (see
- 10 photo)
- 11



- 12 6. When you arrive at the venue turn off the GoPro camera
- 13 using the same red button you used to turn it on and leave
- 14 this in the car (although not on display!)
- 15

- 16 7. Connect the lapel microphone to the digital voice recorder
- 17 in the 'Line In' socket (see top photo on the right) and
- 18 attach the lapel microphone to your jumper/shirt (see
- 19 bottom photo on the right)
- 20



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8. The battery on the digital voice recorder should last approximately 10 hours. We have given you extra batteries so please change them if they are running low.

The digital voice recorder has enough memory for approximately 13 hours of recording so you can leave the Dictaphone running for the whole day (i.e., from the moment you leave the house to when you return).



9. The battery on the GoPro lasts approximately 1.5 hours so you may need to charge the GoPro (when it is empty it beeps and the light turns off). To charge the GoPro, open the small door on the right-hand side of the camera and connect the USB cable (you can use your car USB port for charging or change in a safe place during the tournament). When the Go Pro is charging a red continuous red light is displayed. You can continue to record whilst charging. The memory card has enough space for approximately 4 hours of recording (i.e., 2x 2hour journeys).



If you have any questions or technical problems, contact [Name] on [Phone Number] and [Email].